DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 460 CG 031 052

AUTHOR Roeck, Glen P.
TITLE Improving Organizational/Study Skills in High School Students.
PUB DATE 2001-04-00
NOTE 52p.; Master of Arts Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and Skylight Professional Development Field-Based Masters Program.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Geography; *High Risk Students; High School Freshmen; High Schools; Learning Strategies; Notetaking; Planning; Remedial Instruction; Special Needs Students; *Study Skills; Suburban Schools
IDENTIFIERS United States (Midwest)

ABSTRACT

A program was designed to improve the organizational and study skills of high school freshmen attending a remedial world geography class in a suburban area surrounding a large midwestern city. The target population included special education students, students identified as at-risk, and others who had poor placement test scores. Data analysis revealed that many of these students demonstrated significant deficiencies in organizational and study skills. A review of solution strategies suggested that organizational and study skills training is effective when directly connected to content instruction. This program included pre- and post-evaluations of organizational study skills. Survey data reviewed following program implementation of the notebook system showed moderate assistance for the targeted students. In addition, the results demonstrated that students' ability to maintain the organization of their notebooks improved over time. Appended are the two student surveys and corresponding results, the parent survey and results, and a sample notebook table of contents. (Contains 17 references.) (JDM)

ED 455 460

IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL/STUDY SKILLS IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Glen P. Roeck

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & Skylight Professional Development

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

April, 2001

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
G. ROECK
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CG031052

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Dr. Susan L. Moran
Advisor

Arnold Burbrecht
Advisor

Beverly Colley
Dean, School of Education

ABSTRACT

This study describes a program for improving the organizational and study skills of high school freshman in a remedial world geography class. Deficiencies in these areas are identified and strategies to improve skills are implemented. The targeted population is a high school freshman remedial level world geography class that includes special education students, others that have been identified as "at-risk," and students who simply have poor placement test scores. This middle class community is located in the far suburbs of a large mid-western city. Problems in organizational and study skills have been documented by student grades, student surveys, and parent surveys.

Analysis of the data indicates that many of these students demonstrate significant deficiencies in organizational and study skills. Literature review clearly states that poor organizational and study skills are a national issue. Studies have shown that United States students and parents place less emphasis on homework than do students and parents in other countries.

A review of solution strategies suggested that organizational/study skills training is effective when directly connected to content instruction. This program includes pre and post evaluations of organizational/study skills.

An analysis of pre and post surveys indicates that this notebook system moderately helped the targeted students. The organization of the students and their ability to maintain their notebooks improved over time. Reflections became deeper. Overall, this action research plan was effective.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT.....1

General Statement of the Problem.....1

Immediate Problem Context.....1

The Surrounding Community.....4

National Context of the Problem.....5

CHAPTER 2 – PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION.....7

Problem Evidence.....7

Probable Causes.....13

CHAPTER 3 – THE SOLUTION STRATEGY.....15

Literature Review.....15

Project Objectives and Processes.....20

Project Action Plan.....21

Methods of Assessment.....24

CHAPTER 4 – PROJECT RESULTS.....25

Historical Description of the Intervention.....25

Presentation and Analysis of Results.....27

Conclusions and Recommendations.....28

REFERENCES.....29

APPENDICES.....31

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in the targeted ninth grade social studies world geography class exhibit a deficiency in basic organizational skills ranging from completing homework on time to maintaining past work. Data supporting this area of concern will be collected through student and parent surveys, checklists and lower grades due to lack of skills in this area. Possible solutions to these problems will be presented in the hope that several can be effective in this case and in others as well.

Immediate Problem Context

This study focuses on one school, a high school district in the far suburbs of a major metropolitan area. Tables one through eight provide data ranging from ethnicity of the students to recent standardized test results.

Table 1 displays the racial and ethnic background of the total enrollment in the targeted school district. The average class size is 21.2 students. Most of the students in this school are Caucasian.

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Total Enrollment
School	87.2%	2.0%	7.6%	3.0%	0.1%	1,443

Table 2 displays attendance, mobility and chronic truancy. Attendance issues do not cause significant problems for this school.

Table 2

Attendance, Mobility and Chronic Truancy

	Attendance	Mobility	Chronic Truancy	Number of Chronic Truants
School	93.2%	7.3%	1.3%	18

Table 3 shows most of the teachers are white and the ratio of male to female teachers is roughly equal.

Table 3

Teachers by Racial/Ethnic Background and Gender (full time equivalents)

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Male	Female	Total Number
School	95.5%	2.2%	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%	49.1%	50.9%	90

Table 4 displays the teacher and administrator characteristics.

Table 4

Teacher and Administrator Characteristics (full time equivalents)

	Average Teaching Experience	Teachers with Bachelor's Degree	Teachers with Master's Degree	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Pupil-Certified Staff Ratio	Pupil-Administrator Ratio
School	10.5 Yrs	49.7%	50.3%	17.7:1	12.8:1	165.1:1

Table 5 shows the average teacher and administrator salaries. The salaries are above state averages in both categories.

Table 5

Teacher and Administrator Salaries

	Average Teacher Salary	Average Administrator Salary
School	$46, 955	$90,735

Table 6 displays the average financial indicators for this district.

Table 6

Average Financial Indicators

	Equalized Assessed Valuation per Pupil	Total School Tax Rate per $100	Instructional Expenditure per Pupil	Operating Expenditure per Pupil
School	$363,876	$2.08	$3,592	$7,791

Table 7 shows the ACT average scores. The high school graduation rate is 89.0%.

Table 7

American College Testing Program (ACT)

	Composite Score	English	Math	Reading	Science Reasoning	TEST TAKERS Number	% class
School	22.1	21.8	22.1	22.0	22.2	202	60.3

The Surrounding Community

The targeted high school serves a community which includes several nearby towns. Because the school is a district itself, the students come from six different middle school districts. The majority of the students live in the town where the high school is located. The town covers approximately six square miles and has an estimated population of 16,700 people. The racial distribution of this school is as follows: 87.2% White, 7.6% Hispanic, 2.0% Black and 3.1% Other.

The median home value is $153,650. The average family income is $63,803. The area is at the tail end of a significant building boom that took place during the 1990's. The population more than doubled during this period. All schools within the community have adjusted to the large increase in enrollment. Until the mid-1990's, the last addition to the high school was in the early 1970's. The recent additions are as follows: fourteen classrooms and science labs, a field house including a new locker room and related facilities, an athletic trainer area, and five classrooms and administrative offices. The school is currently under construction adding 30 classrooms, office space and a 500 seat auditorium. The current project is the only recent construction that required the approval of the public in the form of a referendum. Despite the fact that the local elementary and middle school districts have also implemented referendums, the community is generally

supportive of current and future educational needs. A demographics expert who studied this district has predicted that the school will increase from its current enrollment of 1,433 students to approximately 3,000 students by the year 2012. Needless to say, this community is growing quite rapidly.

National Context of the Problem

Documentation strongly supports the need for effective organizational and study skills among students.

> A common explanation of the poor performance of American children in cross cultural comparisons of academic achievement is that American children spend little time in study. American children spend fewer hours in school and devote less time in school and after school to academic activities that do children in many other countries. Among the after-school activities most relevant for academic achievement is homework. (Chen & Stevenson, 1989, p. 551)

Many students complete secondary schooling without ever developing basic organizational/study skills. Specifically, many students cannot easily locate their school materials such as pens, pencils, books, or their homework. This inability to find school materials hinders their academic development because students are constantly behind or are being disciplined by the instructor.

> Students underprepared to meet the organizational demands of a school environment are found in almost every classroom, yet few curricula include units on organizational skills development. Teachers disagree on the issue of who should present these skills. Many feel that they are already stretched to their limits with curricular requirements, and some say that children should acquire these skills at home or that the school counselor should initiate weekly lessons. (Slade,1986, p. 261)

Many students do not know how to prioritize their time to complete their school work. Students are graduating high school with underdeveloped skills in organizing and studying, especially remedial students. Student surveys in remedial classes clearly demonstrate that they do not place an emphasis on homework. Very few if any, study for tests and their grades certainly reflect this. Parents of these remedial students surveyed did not place an emphasis on these skills either. There is a need for greater development of these skills among remedial high school students. If these students choose to attend college, many will be required to take a college level study skills course if they test poorly on placement tests. Why wait until college to develop organizational and study skills? John J. Hoover writes "Study skills are essential elements in the overall educational program of any student. Effective study skills usage allows students to efficiently and meaningfully acquire, record, organize, synthesize, remember and use information." (Hoover, 1989, p. 472) Studies have shown that instruction in organizational and study skills alone is ineffective. Business leaders and future employers have clearly stated that they want graduates who possess solid organizational skills to help them in the ever expanding marketplace of the 21st century.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the problem of a deficiency in organizational skills data has been collected. Data from both students and parents clearly indicate that many students are lacking in these skills. Below are parent's statements about the school's role in teaching study skills.

> **Parent A:** "I think writing is important, in organizing skills some homework and projects, that take some time and not waiting until the last minute."
>
> **Parent B:** "Test students when teachers or parents see grades that are low or drop. Start organizational/study skills at a much younger age, seeing how students are expected to know so much at a young age or before entering school. I believe students are expected to know and do more than they can handle. Schools seem to push students extremely hard."
>
> **Parent C:** "At home: Be sure to have a specified place for homework with adequate lighting and supplies. Also, a good schedule to

allow time for study and homework. At school: teachers can help by giving homework, study, and chapter outlines, with schedule ahead of time for the entire semester, and remind the students of upcoming work needed. Also allow time for questions regarding homework or keep study expectations, so that what is necessary to complete the assignment, or prepare for upcoming class activities, is clearly outlined.

Parent D: "Carthage college offers a one credit class for "returning adult learners" on organization and study skills. This also covers note taking and test taking. I have tried to help with suggestions on note taking and test preparation but there is no uniformity with the school. Each class and teacher works differently and provides different structures and tools. Students are told to "take notes" and to "study" but to the best of my knowledge, have never been shown how to do these things."

Parent E: "At what point during socialization process are students ready to become organized with studies? Should be a one minute manager book geared to high school level."

These comments show that parents are concerned about their student's organizational skills and study skills. The following tables show the parent responses to specific organizational skills and study skills questions.

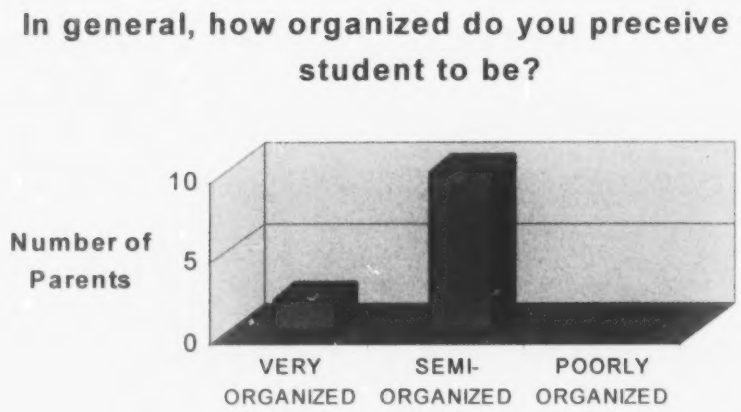


Figure 1: Displays parent responses to the question "In general, how organized do you perceive your student to be?"

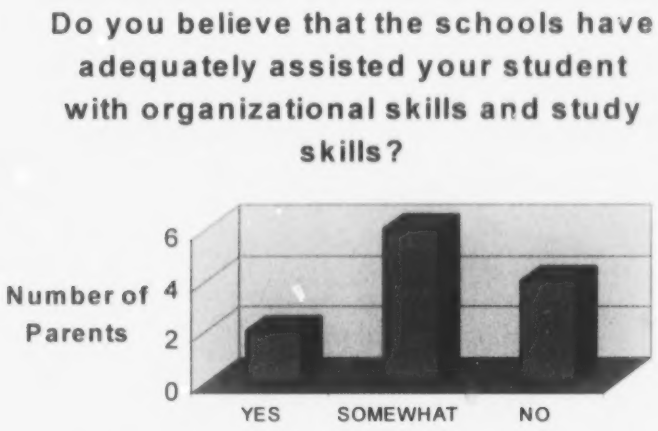


Figure 2: Displays parent responses to the question "Do you believe that the schools have adequately assisted your student with organizational skills and study skills?

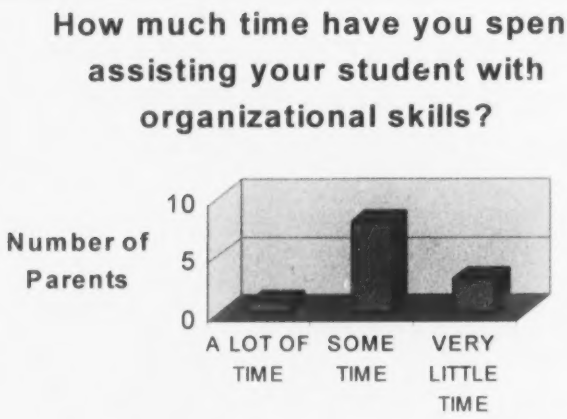


Figure 3: Displays parent responses to the question "How much time have you spent assisting your student with organizational skills?"

Most students who completed a survey on organizational skills and study skills perceived themselves to have average organizational skills. All claimed to own an assignment notebook (the school provides one). The next page displays student responses about their own organizational skills and study skills.

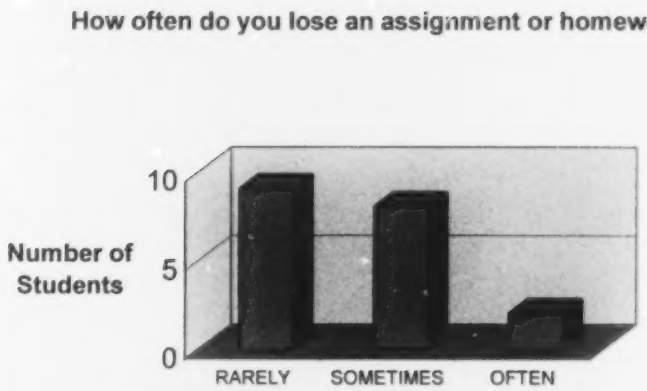


Figure 4: Displays student responses to the question "How often do you lose an assignment or homework?"

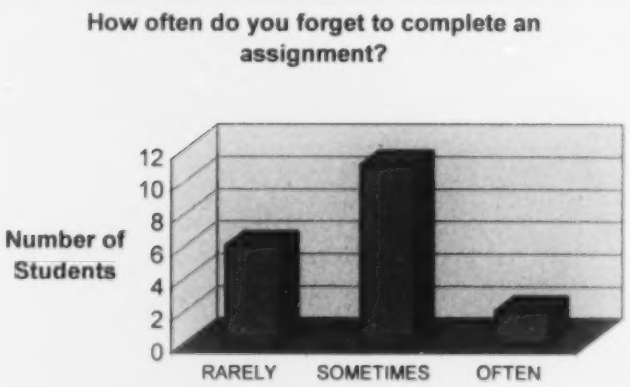


Figure 5: Displays student responses to the question "How often do you forget to complete an assignment?

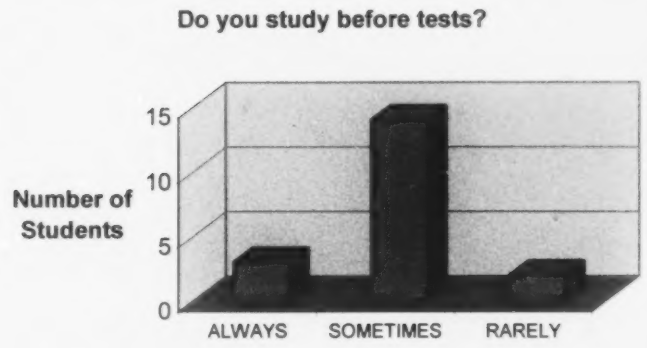


Figure 6: Displays student responses to the question "Do you study before tests?"

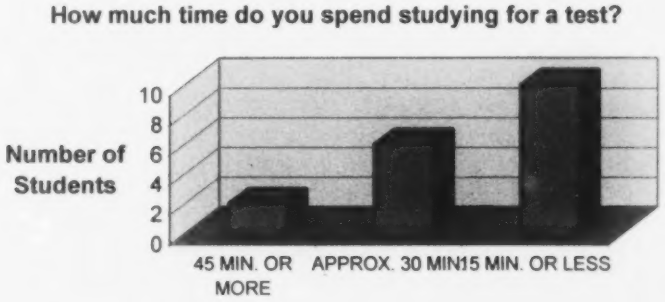


Figure 7: Displays student responses to the question "How much time do you spend studying for a test?

The above graphs clearly indicate the targeted students need some assistance in this area.

PROBABLE CAUSES

Site Based

Many of these students reside in the lower socio-economic areas of the school district and studies have shown that this contributes to lower scores in school. It is difficult to determine the education levels of the student's parents or the structure of their families but it is likely this affects the targeted population. A lack of interest in the student's education is visible in many parents at the targeted school as evident by the lack of participation in parent/teacher conferences and athletic events.

PROBABLE CAUSES

Literature Based

Pat Hinchey writes of three reasons why students do not do their homework. He states that the main reason why students do not do homework is because they claim that they do not have time. As one student states:

> Some of my girlfriends tell me that they're skipping homework because they want to spend time with their boyfriends or hang out with their friends. Sometimes I don't do my homework because I need to get out of the house, go to parties, have guests coming over, have clothes to wash, friends to help with advice, songs to record from the radio. (Hinchey, 1996, p.242)

Students claim that they have other things to do. Many students are involved in extra-curricular activities and or community activities. Most of the students in this case study are not in extra-curricular or community activities.

Hinchey's second reason as to why students do not do homework is because they claim there is no point in doing homework. Another student summarizes "There are some times when students do their homework but the teachers do not collect it to check it. So the students feel that since the teachers don't collect it, they might as well not do it at all." (Hinchey, 1996, p. 243)

Sometimes teachers and parents view students with deficiencies in organizational skills as lazy. Students have a difficult time understanding how to identify and use time to complete a task. Teachers and parents tend to view this inability to organize time as a lazy or carefree attitude. (Hamm & Isaacson, 1985, p. 50)

> Learning disabled students with organizational problems can be taught to function in an organized and sequential manner. Because much of their academic failure is often related to their inability to follow an orderly sequence when instructed to complete a task, teachers need to be made aware of their particular mode of functioning. The solution to these students' problems lies in teacher understanding of why they are failing." (Hamann & Isaacson, 1985)

There are a variety of complex reasons why high school students do not do their homework. Fortunately, there are solutions to these problems.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Within the last thirty years there has been an increased awareness to the need for better study and organizational skills. There is more information to be learned than ever before and students are expected to learn more information earlier in life. Classroom expectations are raised but formal teaching in study skills is not keeping pace (Udziela, 1996).

There is an abundance of literature stressing the importance of study and organizational skills in America's youth. Most researchers agree that study and organizational skills cannot be taught independently, they must be included in a standard curriculum to be effective.

Those who perform poorly in school are not necessarily students with lower intelligence. They most often are low achievers because they simply do not understand how to organize what is to be learned. Students who perform well in school know how to organize the information to be learned. Study and organizational skills is the key to student success. In general, educators have not received formal training in teaching students how to develop study skills. Often, teachers view poor test and homework scores as results of laziness or a lack of motivation in school (Lock, 1981).

Often times, students with difficulties in organizing and sequencing, interpret an assignment due the following day as a task that does not need to be completed now. These students appear to demonstrate the lack of an ability to set a time for completing the assignment. Time organization is difficult for these students and their actions are often interpreted as laziness (Haman & Isaacson, 1985).

Allan Ornstein appropriately writes in NASSP Bulletin (1994):

> Able students usually learn these skills on their own as a byproduct of cognition. However, many students do not learn these skills, or learn them too late, simply because they were not explicitly taught them. The result is, we lose many students, who within the present system are labeled as 'slow,' 'learning disabled,' or functionally illiterate.' They fall by the wayside and are quickly forgotten – and they number in the millions. (p.58-59)

John M. Shields and Timothy E. Heron (1989) contend that the competence of learning disabled students to ". . .understand, manipulate, make decisions about, and complete assigned tasks successfully is not related to their academic skill" (p. 8). It depends on their ability to organize the content, time and material in an effective way.

Shields and Heron cite G. Alley and D. Deshler in their description of some of the problems faced by learning disabled students and organization:

- Difficulty perceiving organization in a set of materials such as notes, texts, and assignments.
- Lack of appreciation of the importance of organizing information.

- Failure to realize that information or materials can be rearranged to produce organized structure.
- Trouble dealing with an isolated task in an organized fashion.
- Trouble dealing with multiple tasks (such as assignments) in an organized fashion (as cited in Shields & Heron, 1989).

Sheilds and Heron refer to Heron's earlier study offering five antecedent strategies that have proven to help students with organizational skills: assignment logs and charts, work stations, guided notes, color coding materials, and timers. They can be used individually or in combination. Assignment logs and charts give students a visual understanding of the content, the tasks at hand and possibly the time allotted for completion. Workstations are areas in a classroom set aside for in class work, signaling to the student that academic work is to be completed. Parents are encouraged to prepare a similar place at home for the student. Guided notes, or notes that are structured in an outline format can be quite beneficial to the learning disabled student. These can be used in many different subject areas. Color-coding assignments can provide the students with a better understanding of when assignments are due. "Red" assignments might be due the following day and "green" in a week. Sometimes using a kitchen timer can be effective for learning disabled students in the area of time management. This can aid them in working to their maximum ability (as cited in Shields & Heron, 1989).

Ramona D. Williamson recommends that teachers help their students develop and maintain organization by spending a few minutes each day in this area. She contends that when disorganized students lose assignments they suffer from low self-image, poor grades and stress. Instruction in organization should focus on daily school related

routines in the areas of desks, book-bags, lockers and class materials (Williamson, 1997).

There are many things that can affect study skills. They include socioeconomic status, heredity, family, student motivation, and self-image. Most of these mentioned cannot be changed by a teacher but teachers can influence the learning of study skills, student self-image and student motivation (Devine, 1981). G. Bracey holds a similar view. He warns that children spend nine percent of their lives in school from birth to eighteen years of age and that the public should consider other factors that influence test scores: family income, poverty, personal hygiene of students, educational level of parents, motivation and cultural factors (Bracey, 1998). N. Noddings has stated that the educational level of parents is the strongest predictor of how students perform in school (Noddings, 1997). Considering all the factors that can influence students in school, what is the most appropriate method to teach study skills? The following section will discuss several approaches.

In the early 1900's educators began to better understand individual differences in student learning. F. M. McMurry of Columbia University outlined in 1909 seven steps that improve study techniques.

1. Develop specific purposes or objectives as to why some things should be studies.
2. Try to supplement an author's ideas by going beyond what has been written.
3. Realize that "the sum of details does not equal the whole." In other words, read with the attitude that the meaning of a passage exists in the ideas that are built from examples.

4. Judge the worth of what an author writes. Simply because an idea appears in print does not make it true.
5. Knowing how to memorize is a valuable skill.
6. Try to apply the idea embodied in reading material to your own experiences.
7. Develop a flexible attitude toward knowledge. Learning is a growing process; not a fixation of information. (McMurray as cited in Lock, 1981, p. 4)

During the 1920's the first books specifically on study habits were published and offered information on developing study methods. One text stressed the importance of the physical surrounding in a study area. Cecile Flemming in the 1930's ". . .advocated training students to use techniques that emphasized rapid reading, skimming, outlining, note-taking, listening skills, problem solving, and reference books." (as cited in Lock, 1981, p. 5) Robinson's SQ3R strategy (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) developed from the methods used during World War II to train soldiers became quite popular after the war. SQ3R was revised in 1961 in Robinson's book Effective Study and more modern how-to-study books soon followed (Lock, 1981).

Although research on the effectiveness of homework is inconclusive, homework should be well designed. Shorter assignments seem to have more influence on learning when compared to long-term projects (Cooper, 1989). Joseph Murphy and Karen Decker randomly surveyed 5,092 teachers in 100 high schools on their implementation of homework. 2,956 teachers responded and the researchers found that most teachers assign homework to reinforce class material or to master course objectives. Most of these

teachers utilized textbook questions and worksheets as their primary method of instruction (Murphy & Decker, 1990).

> At least two interpretations can be drawn from this information. It is possible that these patterns reflect teachers' efforts to provide concentrated doses of independent practice. This would be consistent with learning theory and research on teaching functions. It is also possible, however, that these patterns reflect a lack of attention to higher order thinking skills on the part of these teachers. (Murphy & Decker, 1990, p. 41)

Ronald L. Partin states that the value of homework is determined by how much it advances other educational objectives. Busy work has very little benefit. Partin proposes the belief that assigning homework does not automatically result in learning. Incorrect or incomplete homework offers little gain in learning and too difficult homework can be counterproductive. When homework is used effectively, it can reinforce the concepts and skills to be learned (Partin, 1986).

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on organizational skills and study skills, during the period of September 2000 to January 2001, the ninth grade students from the targeted class will increase their ability to use organizational skills and study skills in world geography class, as measured by teacher constructed tests, post-surveys, and both student and teacher reviews of notebooks.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Materials that develop effective strategies in organizational and study skills will be created and modified as necessary.
2. The teacher will model effective strategies in organizational and study skills.
3. Activities will be designed to give students opportunities to incorporate appropriate materials on organizational and study skills.

Project Action Plan

WEEK 1: -administer parent and student surveys

-introduce basics of organization and study skills

-model organization

-allow students to share organizational strategies and techniques

-explain requirements of organization/study skills in class

-ensure that all students obtain assignment notebook and use it properly

-ensure that all students obtain a high quality spiral notebook with a plastic cover for use in class

-check organizational progress to ensure that students are preparing notebook properly

WEEK 2: -continue to check assignment notebook daily

-check notebook progress

-check daily assignments in notebook

-collect notebook and grade

-reflect in notebook to make it more like a portfolio (topic: What I have learned and incorporated to help me with organization and study skills.)

WEEK 3: -continue to check assignment notebook daily

-check notebook progress

-check daily assignments in notebook

-collect notebook and grade

-reflect in notebook to make it more like a portfolio (topic: What I have learned in geography class that is important.)

WEEK 4: -continue to check assignment notebook daily

-check notebook progress

-check daily assignments in notebook

-collect notebook and grade

-reflect in notebook to make it more like a portfolio (topic: How can I improve on my notebook and test scores?)

WEEK 5: -continue to check assignment notebook daily

-check notebook progress

-check daily assignments in notebook

-collect notebook and grade

-reflect in notebook to make it more like a portfolio (topic: Evaluate my current notebook and test scores. What grade would I like to earn for this semester? What must I to do to achieve this goal?)

WEEK 6: -continue to check assignment notebook daily

-check notebook progress

-check daily assignments in notebook

-collect notebook and grade

-reflect in notebook to make it more like a portfolio (topic: List three areas where I am successful in my notebook.)

WEEK 7: -continue to check assignment notebook daily

-check notebook progress

-check daily assignments in notebook

-collect notebook and grade

-reflect in notebook to make it more like a portfolio (topic: What I have learned in geography class that is important.)

WEEK 8: -continue to check assignment notebook daily

-check notebook progress

-check daily assignments in notebook

-collect notebook and grade

-reflect in notebook to make it more like a portfolio (topic: What I have learned and incorporated to help me with organization and study skills.)

WEEK 9: -continue to check assignment notebook daily

-check notebook progress

-check daily assignments in notebook

-collect notebook and grade

-reflect in notebook to make it more like a portfolio (topic: Things I'll do differently next semester in this class.)

Methods of Assessment

At the beginning of the semester the targeted group of students was given a survey on their study skills and organizational skills (see appendix A). Student responses were charted (see appendix B). At the same time the targeted group of students was given a survey to be completed by one of their parents or gardians (see appendix C). Parent and guardian responses were charted (see appendix D).

The world geography curriculum including organizational strategies was started at the beginning of the semester and students were expected to use the school provided assignment notebook. All class work, except for poster projects was completed in a high quality spiral notebook with a plastic cover. Assignments were written directly in the notebook and handouts were glued to the notebook pages using a glue-stick. The first first few pages were set aside for a table of contents. Students were required to use this notebook arrangement for this class. Daily homework was checked and formal instruction was given on test preparation prior to the first test. Student notebooks and tests were graded and returned. The students completed a self-evaluation in the form of a reflection on their notebook and test scores. This process continued throughout the semester.

At the end of the semester the students were given a similar survey to complete to determine if their study habits have changed (see appendices E and F). Strong emphasis was placed on using the presented study skills in other classes.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve organizational skills and study skills through the use of assignment notebooks and a spiral notebook for all class work. The targeted group was a basic level, high school freshman world geography class.

Students were first surveyed about their study skills and organizational skills (appendix A). Student responses are shown in appendix B. A parent of each student was also surveyed about their student's organizational skills and study skills (appendix C). Parent responses are shown in appendix D.

Once the surveys were completed, the use of the student's assignment notebook was encouraged. All students were required to obtain a high quality spiral notebook with a plastic cover that contains at least one hundred pages. The student's name and the instructor's name were neatly written on an adhesive mailing label and placed on the cover of the notebook. Several times throughout the course of the semester a lost notebook was returned to the student because someone recognized the instructors name. The notebook includes a table of contents for assignments and all class work placed in the remaining pages. Appendix G details the set up of this notebook. Assignments are

either written in the notebook or handouts are inserted using a glue stick. Each student is required to have a glue stick. Once an assignment is given, time is provided for students to update their table of contents, turn to the appropriate page in their notebook, write the title of their assignment, and glue in the handout if needed. The use of three ring binders is strongly discouraged because too often the pages are torn out and promptly lost. Generally, these students do not have the organizational skills needed to maintain a three ring binder that includes all class work.

A table of contents for the current unit is always posted in the back of the room on a dry erase board and the notebook is collected at the end of each unit, approximately every two to three weeks. Daily assignments have been checked for completeness throughout instruction using a "completion" stamp. The strategy of using a spiral notebook was obtained from the Bureau of Education and Research and modified for use in this setting (Treiber, 1994). After the notebooks were reviewed, grades were written in the table of contents along with general comments about the students performance. Usually at this time unit tests were taken and also graded. Once students viewed their notebook scores and test scores, they were instructed to write a brief reflection in their notebooks about their study skills and organizational skills during this unit of instruction. They were encouraged to evaluate their performance and write about their strengths and weaknesses.

The process of using the notebook and writing reflections about personal performance was implemented throughout the entire school year with the expectations that students would understand their weaknesses and gradually improve throughout the school year.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Post surveys display data about the intervention. A majority of the targeted students believed the notebook system helped them to stay organized.

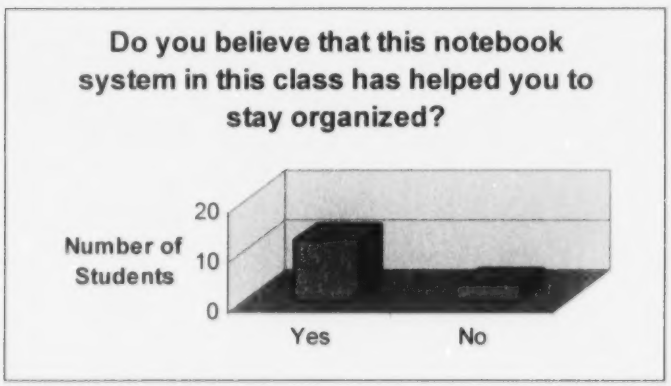


Figure 1: Displays student responses to the question "do you believe that this notebook system in this class has helped you to stay organized?"

Most students stated that the notebooks helped them measurably.

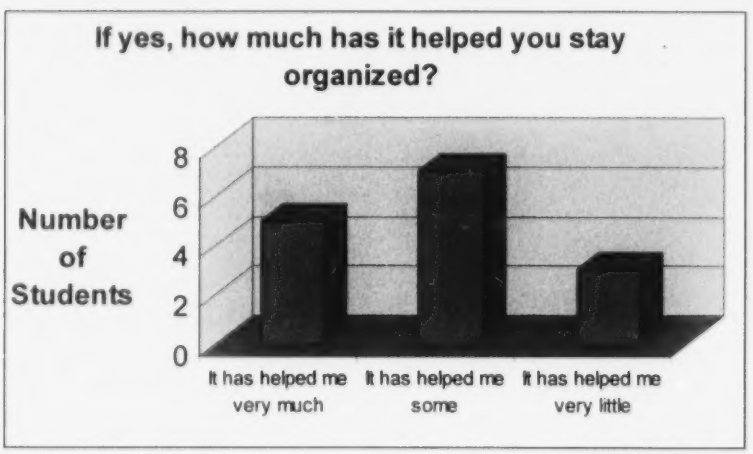


Figure 2: Displays student responses to the question "if yes, how much has it helped you stay organized?"

Conclusions and Recommendations

An analysis of the student pre and post surveys indicate that this notebook system helped the targeted students stay organized. Initially, the instructor had to model the organizational strategy and slowly guide the students as they set up their notebooks. Over time the students were able to maintain their notebooks with very little assistance from the instructor. None of the notebooks were permanently lost and very seldom was a replacement handout requested. Students remained organized and instructors were able to spend more time on other topics. This organizational system enabled students to spend less time organizing and more time studying and preparing for class.

Teachers of classes with a high population of special education and at risk students with organizational deficiencies are strongly encouraged to use this notebook system. It prevents students from losing worksheets and other handouts. Time must be spent at the beginning of the year to set up the notebook but once it is prepared it requires little maintenance on the part of the instructor. Some instructors have used this system by having students write basic classroom notes on the left page of an open notebook and reflections on the right side to make it more of a reflective portfolio. Interested teachers are cautioned to remain consistent when using this notebook system to obtain maximum benefits.

References

Bracey, G. W. (1998). Put to the Test: An Educator's and Consumer's Guide to Standardized Testing. Bloomington: Indiana Center for Professional Development and Services.

Chen, C., & Stevenson, H. W. (1989). Homework: A cross-cultural examination. Child Development, 60, 551-561.

Cooper, H. (1989). Homework. New York: Longman

Devine, Thomas G. (1981). Teaching Study Skills: a guide for teachers. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Haman, Theresa A. & Isaacson, Douglas K. (1985). Sharpening Organizational Skills. Academic Therapy, 21:1, 45-50.

Hinchey, P. (1996). Why kids say they don't do homework. The Clearing House, 69 (4), 242-245.

Hoover, J. J. (1989). Implementing a study skills program in the classroom. Academic Therapy, 24, 471-476.

Lock, Corey. (1981). Study Skills. West Lafayette, IN: Delta Pi

Murphy, Joseph & Decker, Karen. (1990). Homework Use at the High School Level: Implications for Principals. NASSP Bulletin,74, 40-43.

Noddings, N. (1997). Thinking About Standards. Phi Delta Kappan, 79 (3), 184.

Ornstein, A. C. (1994) Homework, studying, and note taking: Essential skills for students. NASSP Bulletin, 59-70.

Partin, R. L. (1986). Homework that helps. The Clearing House, 60 (3), 118-119.

Shields, John M. & Heron, Timothy E. (1989). Teaching Organizational Skills to Students with Learning Disabilitites. Teaching Exceptional Children, Winter, 8-13

Slade, D. L. (1986). Developing foundations for organizational skills. Academic Therapy, 21 (3), 261-266.

Treiber, Deborah. (1994). Strengthening Your History/Social Science Instruction: practical strategies that work. Bellebue, WA: Bureau of Education & Research

Udziela, Theresa. (1996). Effect of Formal Study Skills Training on Sixth Grade Reading Achievement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 091)

Williamson, Ramona D. (1997). Help Me Organize. Intervention in School and Clinic. 33 (1), 36-39.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Student Survey 1

STUDENT SURVEY
MR. ROECK
WORLD GEOGRAPHY

Directions: Please answer the following questions as truthfully as you can. Your name is not required for this survey.

(CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BLANK FOR EACH QUESTION)

1. As a high school student, how organized do you consider yourself to be?
____ VERY ORGANIZED ____ AVERAGE ____ POORLY ORGANIZED

2. How organized do you believe your parents and teachers consider you to be?
____ VERY ORGANIZED ____ AVERAGE ____ POORLY ORGANIZED

3. How often do you lose an assignment or homework?
____ RARELY ____ SOMETIMES ____ OFTEN

4. Do you own an assignment notebook?
____ YES ____ NO

5. How often do you use your assignment notebook?
____ OFTEN ____ A FEW TIMES A WEEK ____ NEVER

6. How often do you forget to complete an assignment or homework?
____ RARELY ____ SOMETIMES ____ OFTEN

7. How often do you intentionally not do a homework assignment?
____ NEVER ____ SOMETIMES ____ OFTEN

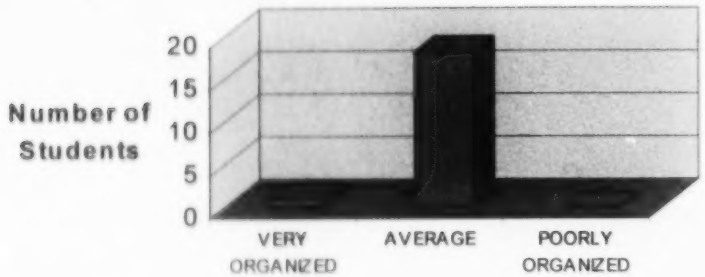
8. Do you study before tests?
____ ALWAYS ____ SOMETIMES ____ RARELY

9. How much time do you spend studying for a test?
____ APPROX. 45 MIN OR MORE ____ APPROX. 30 MIN. OR LESS ____ 15 MIN. OR LESS

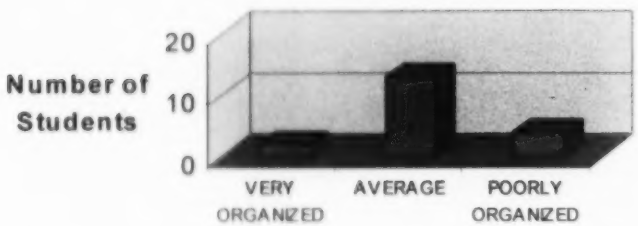
10. How concerned are you about your grades in school?
____ VERY CONCERNED ____ SEMI-CONCERNED ____ NOT CONCERNED

Appendix B
Responses to Student Survey 1

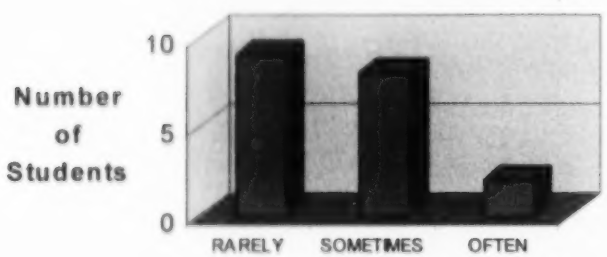
As a high school student, how organized to you consider yourself to be?



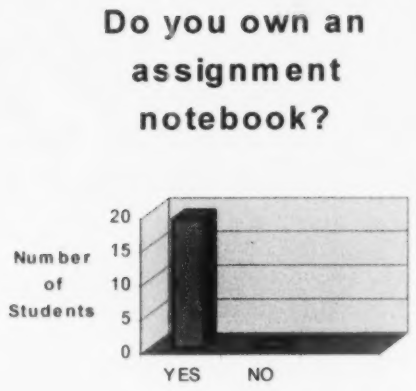
How organized do you believe your parents and teachers consider you to be?

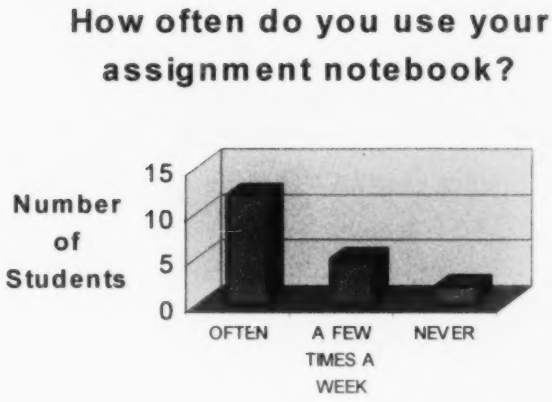


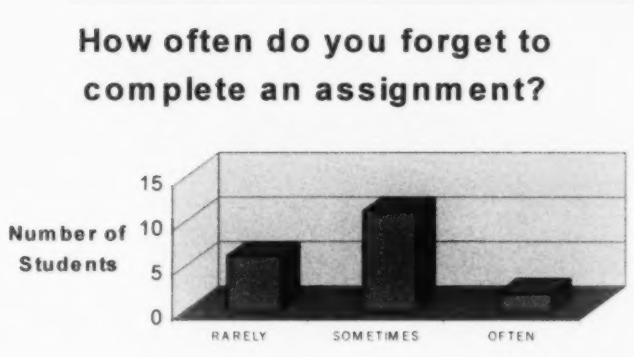
How often do you lose an assignment or homework?



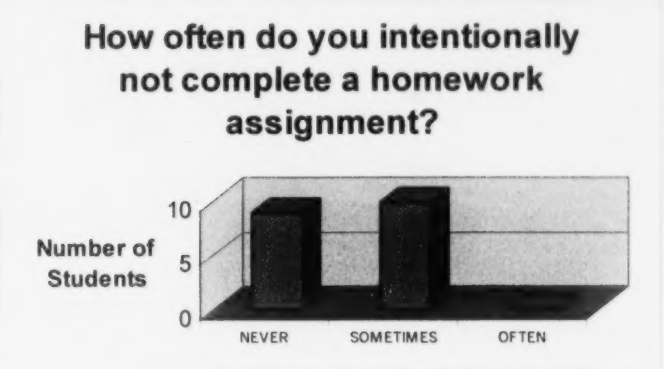
Appendix B
Responses to Student Survey 1

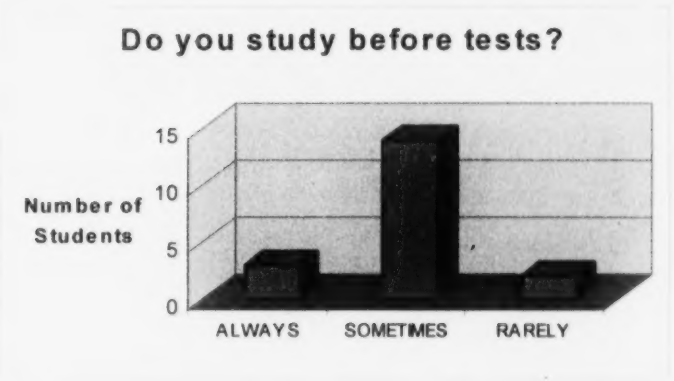


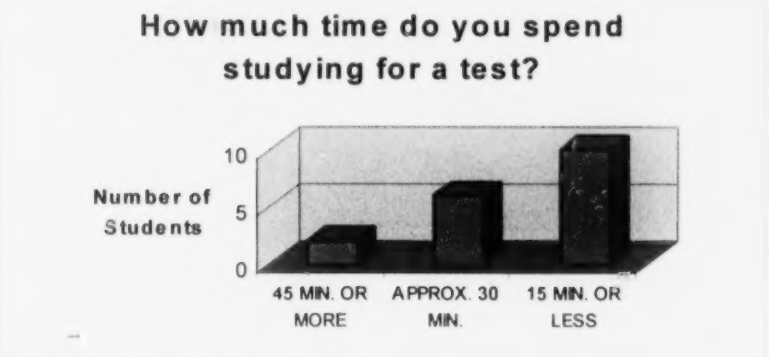




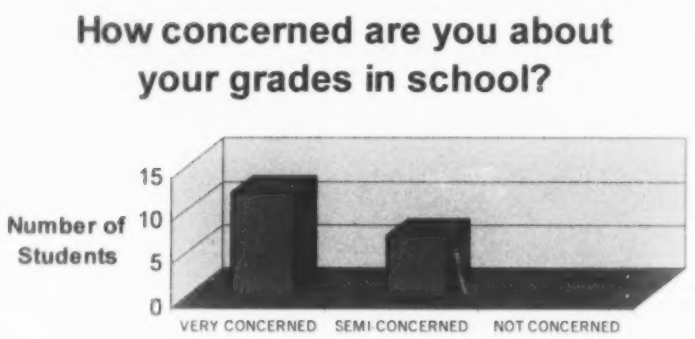
Appendix B
Responses to Student Survey 1







Appendix B
Responses to Student Survey 1



Appendix C
Parent Survey

Dear Parents,

As part of my graduate program I am asking if you would complete a short survey about your student's organizational skills and study skills. The data will aid me in developing strategies to improve our student's performance in these areas. Your input is valuable to me!

Thank You,

Glen Roeck

Glen Roeck
Social Studies Department

DIRECTIONS: Check the appropriate response for each question.

5. In general, how organized do you perceive your student to be?

____ Very organized ____ Semi-organized ____ Poorly organized

2. How much time have you spent assisting your student with organizational skills?

____ A lot of time ____ Some time ____ Very little time

3. Do you believe your assistance has been effective?

____ very effective ____ Somewhat effective ____ Very little effective

4. How often do you assist your student with homework?

____ Several times a week ____ Occasionally ____ Rarely

5. Do you believe that the schools have adequately assisted your student with organizational skills and study skills?

____ Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No

OVER →

Appendix C
Parent Survey

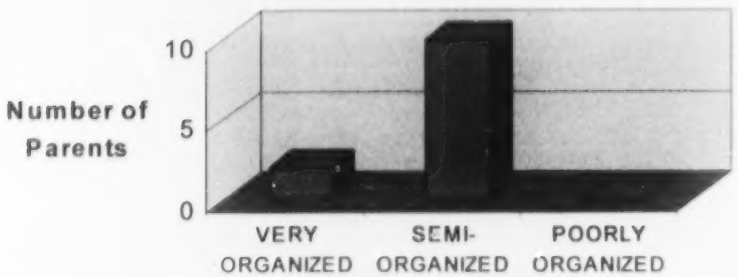
6. Please list any suggestions that you might have regarding the school's role or parent's role in developing organizational/study skills.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

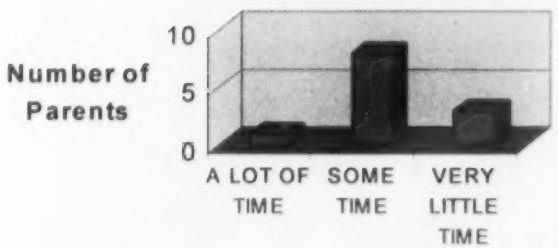
Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix D
Responses to Parent Survey

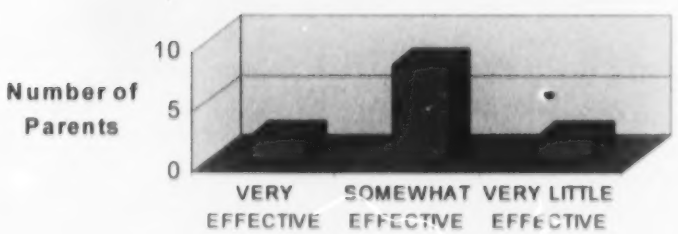
In general, how organized do you preceive your student to be?



How much time have you spent assisting your student with organizational skills?



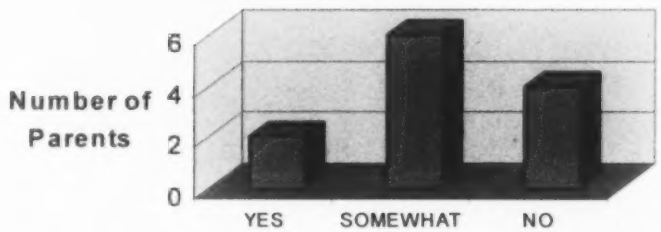
Do you believe your assistance has been effective?



Appendix D
Responses to Parent Survey

How often do you assist your student with homework?

Do you believe that the schools have adequately assisted your student with organizational skills and study skills?



Appendix E
Student Survey 2

STUDENT SURVEY
MR. ROECK
WORLD GEOGRAPHY

Directions: Check the appropriate blank for each question.

1. Which World Geography class were you in last semester?
___ 3rd hour ___ 5th hour

2. Do you believe that the notebook system in this class has helped you to stay organized?
___ Yes ___ No

3. If yes, how much has it helped you stay organized?
___ It has helped me very much ___ It has helped me some ___ It has helped me very little

4. As a high school student, how organized do you consider yourself to be?
___ Very organized ___ Average ___ Poorly organized

5. How organized do you believe your parents and teachers consider you to be?
___ Very organized ___ Average ___ Poorly organized

6. How often do you lose an assignment or homework?
___ Rarely ___ Sometimes ___ Often

7. Do you own an assignment notebook?
___ Yes ___ No

8. How often do you use your assignment notebook?
___ Often ___ A few times a week ___ Never

9. How often do you forget to complete an assignment or homework?
___ Rarely ___ Sometimes ___ Often

10. How often do you intentionally not do an assignment or homework?
___ Never ___ Sometimes ___ Often

11. Do you study before tests?
___ Always ___ Sometimes ___ Rarely

Appendix E
Student Survey 2

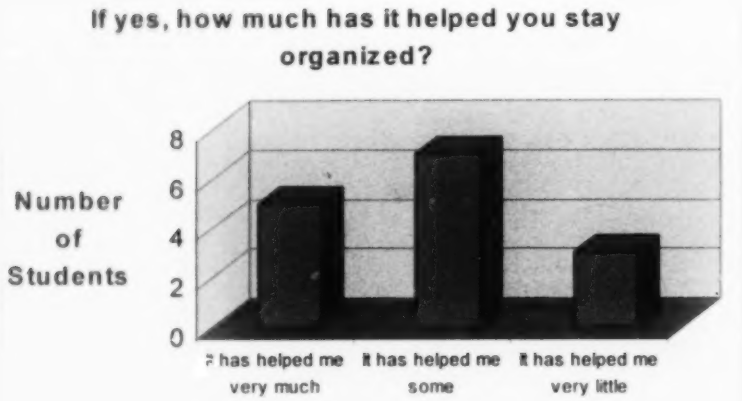
12. How much time do you spend studying for a test?

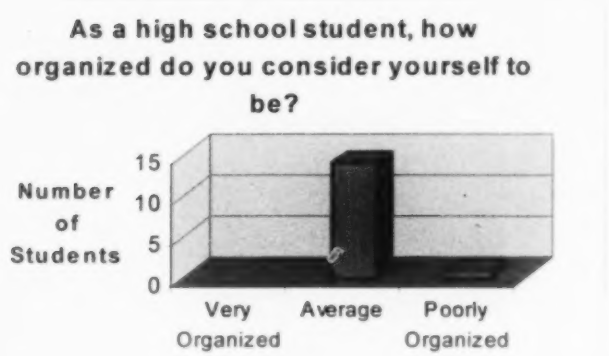
___ Approximately 45 minutes or more ___ Approximately 30 minutes ___ Usually 15 minutes or less

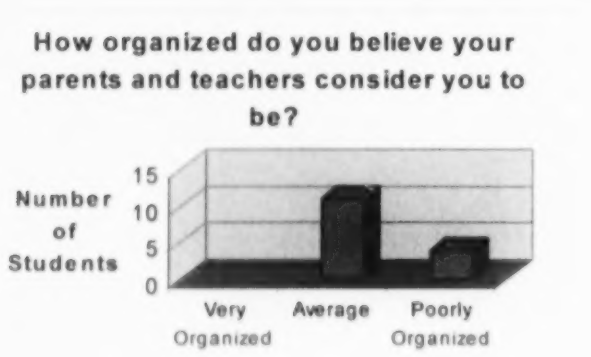
13. How concerned are you about your grades in school?

___ Very concerned ___ Semi-concerned ___ Not concerned

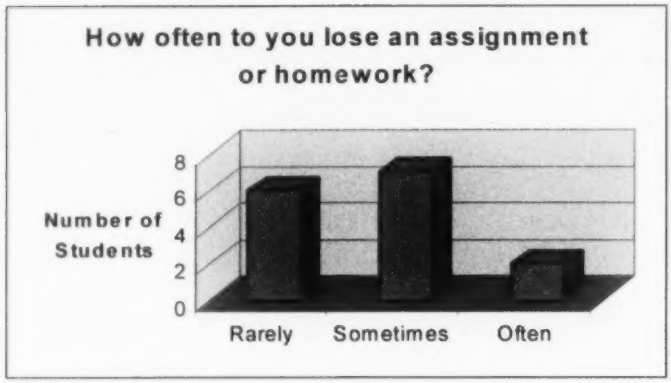
Appendix F
Responses to Student Survey 2

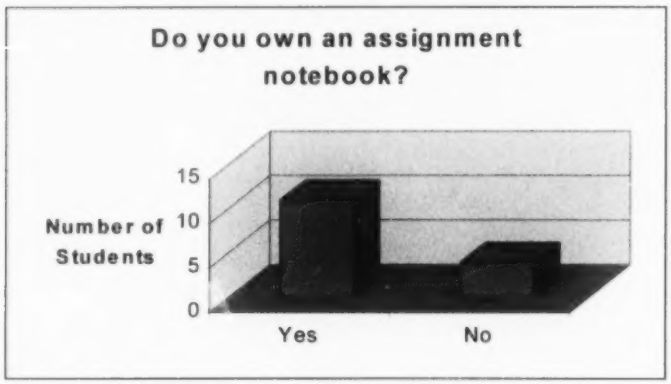


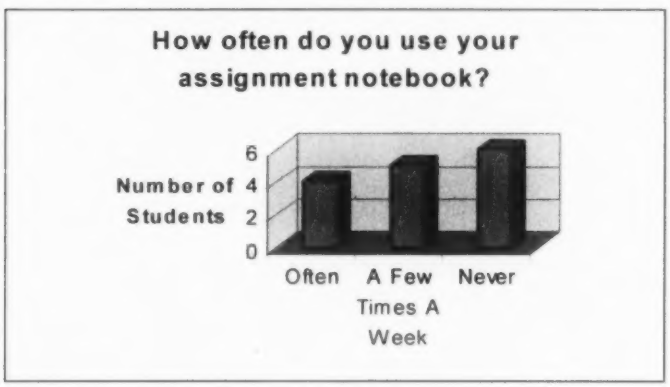




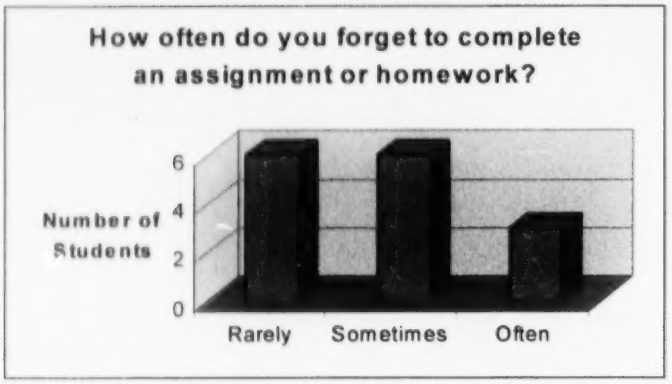
Appendix F
Responses to Student Survey 2

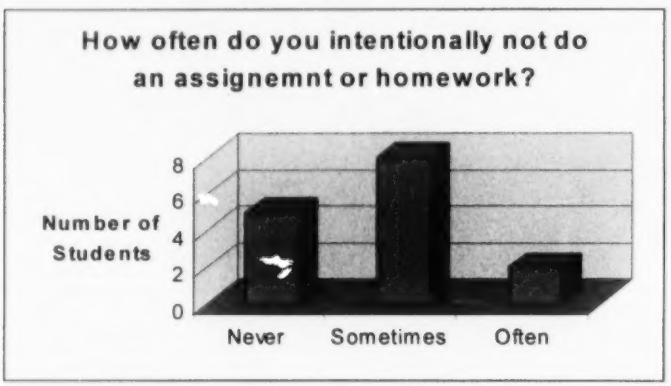


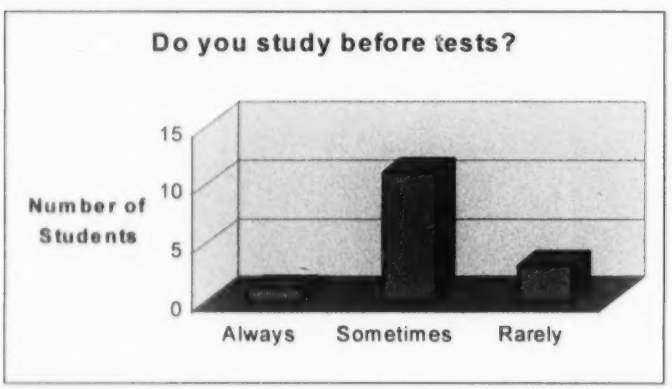




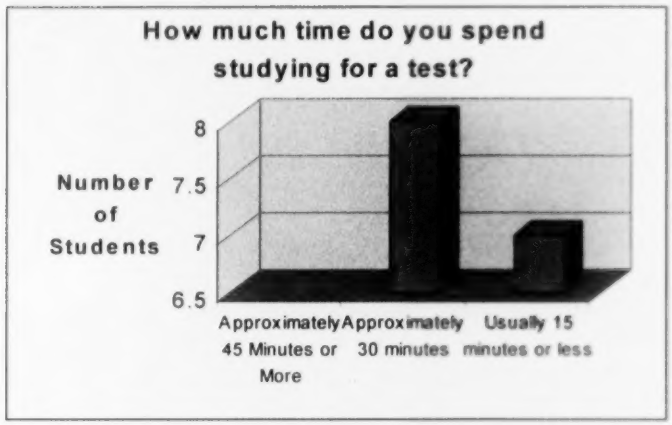
Appendix F
Responses to Student Survey 2

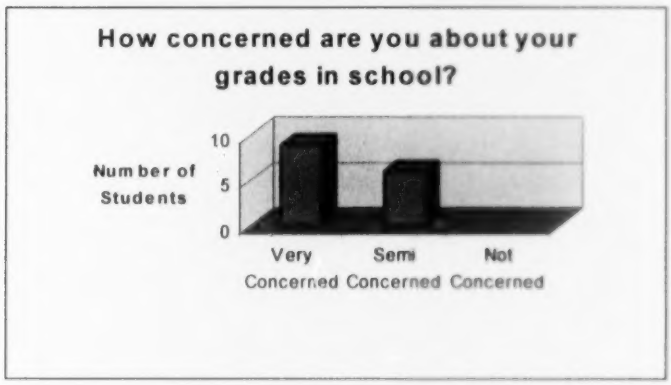






Appendix F
Responses to Student Survey 2





Appendix G
Sample Notebook Table of Contents

1. Freehand map from ~~memory~~ 25 features
2. ~~Free hand map~~ First attempt of labeling 50 states
3. ~~Regions of the US. activity~~ 50 states. labeled correctley
4. 10. natl. park notes
5. 10.1 notes
6. 10.2 focus a Sec. Rev. Q+A
7. physco graphic regions of the US.
8. Desk top activity #10+#11
9. Desk Map activity #18+19
10. Guided notes of US. Regions
11. Presentation Directions
12. Focus Questions for presentation
13. Timeline/Rubric
14. ~~outline~~/Graded Rubric
15. Road trip activity: atlas
16. Group member activities
17. Road trip activity internet
18. Chapter 11 Graphic Organizer
19. Chap. 12 Graphic Organizer
20. Chap. 13 reteaching
21. Chap. 14 reteaching
22. Chap 15 reteaching pg 1
23. pg 2
24. ~~Study suggestions~~
25. ~~Log~~ Journal/Reflection
26. Crossword
27. Map Political
28. Map physical features
29. Map Natural Resources?
30. 16.1 notes
31. 16.2 NOTES
32. 16.3 FOCUS+SOC Rev

this should be 1st on list not 3rd

(1)

question on back not answered

(2)

#10 ~~outline~~ pg 3 not answered

(3)

* do not glue papers w/ a front & back comment on comment sheet the back

96 1/2

NW work using close reading strategies front & back do a little bit each day

BEST COPY AVAILABLE